

# Grounds for Marriage

How Relationships Succeed or  
Fail

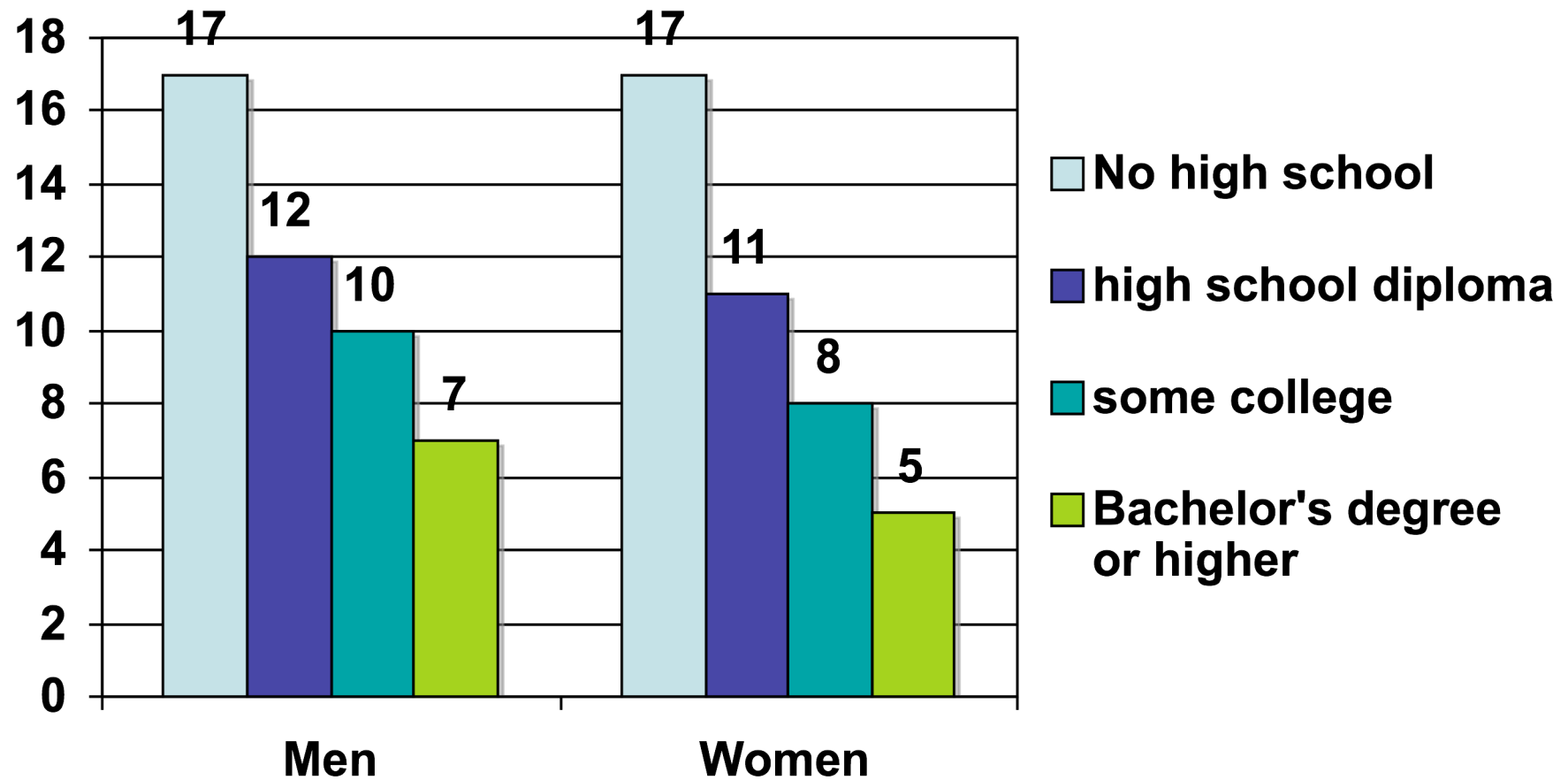
# Psychological Revolution

- occurred between 1950s and 1970s
- 1950s
  - judged their marriage on how well the partner fulfilled their **social role**
    - is he a good provider?
    - is she a good homemaker?
- 1970s
  - people sought emotional warmth and intimacy
- Why the change?
  - higher education (college)

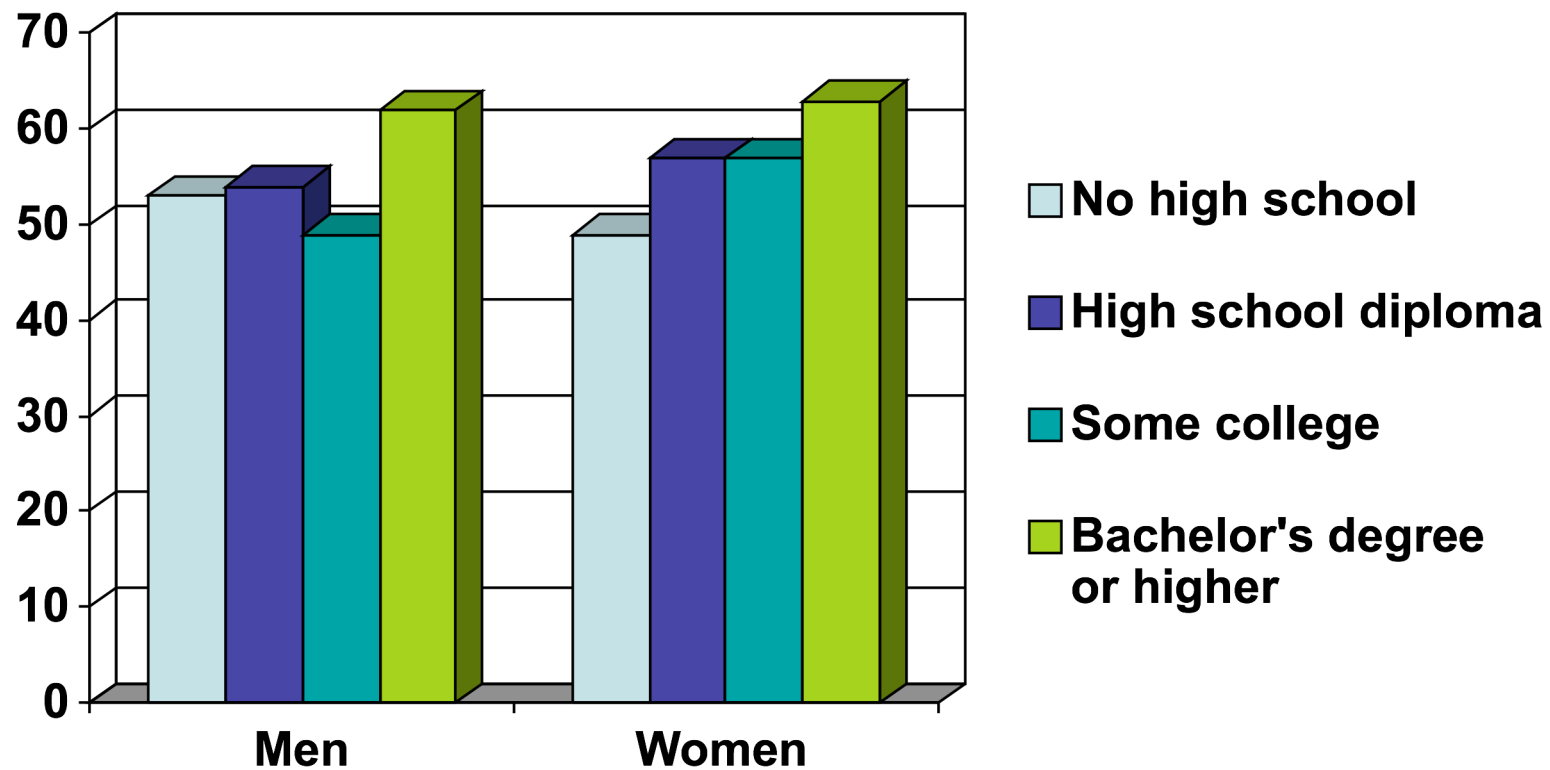
# For Better and For Worse

- Every marriage has both good and bad
- The key is balance
  - anger, arguments, disagreements are okay
  - but the good must outweigh the bad
    - 5 times more good than bad

# Percentages Cohabiting, 2002



# Percentages Married, 2002



# Gottman's 3 Styles of Marriage

- Validating
- Volatile
- Avoidant

# Validating

- Listen and understand each partner's point of view
- Value other while disagreeing
  - more like problem-solving discussions
  - negotiate compromises
- Value “we-ness” of relationship
- Risk: passionless arrangement

# Volatile

- Fight on grand scale--make up on grand scale
- Highly engaged with each other
- See selves as equal parties in relationship
- Easily express feelings, opinions, & thoughts
- Risk: slide into too much fighting

# Avoidance

- Conflict minimizers
- Agree to disagree--shove it under the rug
- Low level of companionship
- High degree of autonomy
- Risk: Encountering problem too big to avoid

# Where do most relationships fall?



# Gottman's 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse

- Behavioral Patterns that indicate a problem in a marriage
  1. criticism (of the spouse's character)
  2. contempt (insults, name calling, mockery)
  3. defensiveness (feeling hurt and misunderstood)
  4. stonewalling (silence and avoidance)

# 7 Tips for Successful Marriage by John Gottman

- Seek help early.
- Edit yourself.
- Soften your "start up."
- Accept influence.
- Have high standards.
- Learn to repair and exit the argument.
- Focus on the bright side.

# Seek Help early

- The average couple waits six years before seeking help for marital problems (and keep in mind, half of all marriages that end do so in the first seven years). This means the average couple lives with unhappiness for far too long.

# Edit Yourself

- Couples who avoid saying every critical thought when discussing touchy topics are consistently the happiest.

# Soften Your “Start Up”

- Arguments first "start up" because a spouse sometimes escalates the conflict from the get-go by making a critical or contemptuous remark in a confrontational tone. Bring up problems gently and without blame.

# Accept Influence

- A marriage succeeds to the extent that the husband can accept influence from his wife. If a woman says, "Do you have to work Thursday night? My mother is coming that weekend, and I need your help getting ready," and her husband replies, "My plans are set, and I'm not changing them". This guy is in a shaky marriage. A husband's ability to be influenced by his wife (rather than vice-versa) is crucial because research shows women are already well practiced at accepting influence from men, and a true partnership only occurs when a husband can do so as well.

# Have High Standards

- Happy couples have high standards for each other even as newlyweds. The most successful couples are those who, even as newlyweds, refused to accept hurtful behavior from one another. The lower the level of tolerance for bad behavior in the beginning of a relationship, the happier the couple is down the road.

# Learn to Repair and Exit the Argument

- Successful couples know how to exit an argument. Happy couples know how to repair the situation before an argument gets completely out of control. Successful repair attempts include: changing the topic to something completely unrelated; using humor; stroking your partner with a caring remark; making it clear you're on common ground; backing down; and, in general, offering signs of appreciation for your partner and his or her feelings along the way.

# Focus on the Bright Side

- In a happy marriage, while discussing problems, couples make at least five times as many positive statements to and about each other and their relationship as negative ones. For example, "We laugh a lot;" not, "We never have any fun". A good marriage must have a rich climate of positivity. Make deposits to your emotional bank account.